

Philadelphia, 2019

It all started with the pill shaped like a blue flat ellipsoid with two lines for breaking it into three sections and triple A imprinted on the back. Someone put it in the drug baggie sticking out of the 3D foam-sealed spray-paint chunked trash collage hanging off the bathroom stall wall as the appointed piece of art for us rave-goers to ponder whilst shitting. I dry swallowed it and waited to feel up or down or turned around. I wondered why I was the first one to have noticed it and taken it, and wondered how long it had been there for. The dance floor melted a bit. Nothing too crazy. I stopped thinking about the pill. The dance floor was mostly empty and so thick with fog that it disappeared everyone else who was on it. Perfect conditions to feel alone, or to feel. I danced with a lover named O when I wasn't weave-warbling around the outer limits of the black concrete ground and back into its cracked core. The DJ was bad. The DJs were always bad at this particular outfit, at least during that early era. "Rabbit" was its name. Not much else happened at the rave that night besides stealing the head off a porcelain bunny, the very soul and spirit of the place, polishing off the most expensive bottle of tequila that had ever passed my lips, chucking said bottle off the roof top and hearing it shatter into a car alarm, and waiting too damn long for the bus. The next day I woke up and went outside and discovered following letter in my mailbox:

ABBA

This is to inform you that all the food ate since first grade is alive in your body, especially the dead animal remains or meat since it was cooked alive and is alive in your body. Anywhere it goes now, you must go with it. That's 365 days a year from first grade to now.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.

Also, newborn baby received your first grade body, or a meal just like the 365 days a year.

Breakfast Lunch Dinner

The only way I see for you to save yourself from the every which a way of being burned alive

That's scheduled is to become a solid steel statue by place yourself under **anesthesia** ,

and mixing your body with melted metal then re solidifying the metal or seal **yourself in cement.**

When it becomes real to you, you can type it up and have a lot of copies made, **then pass them out and post them** up.

What is needed is a steel furnace where metal can be melted and the bodies of **people and animals mixed with the metal** to become steel unable to be hurt.

Of course, you'll be sedated first.

There will b a meeting on April 27, 2019 12 o'clock in the afternoon on the subject **of building a steel furnace at 27th and Girard Ave.** on the vacant lot.

What we need is a bulldozer to dig some ditches and steel furnace equipment.

Do attend

I was thrilled to discover acid heads, or prophets, still wanted to reach out and dig their dirty fingernails into the belly of the sleeping world. I wondered if I was a random recipient of this message or a specific one. I assumed the latter, because assuming the latter was more fun, which meant maybe I was being watched. Shadowed in some way. I went up to my room and out the window to the tar slapped section of roof deemed my deck. Next to it was a second, slightly larger and more luxurious roof deck belonging to the house next door. The house next door belonged to no one. Vacant, with a for sale sign and mail spilling out the door slot and down the front steps. I tried the window. It was locked. Punched in the glass and reached through to unlock it. Raised it. Dust smell wafted over me before I had even entered the house. The floor creaked weak curtains blew in the new breeze when I stepped inside. There was no one here. I walked through the upstairs, bathroom, kitchen, all unfurnished untouched carpet clean and walls unsmudged. A still life in unlit window light. There were no peepholes into my room and no schizophrenic murals scrawled in tripped-out stupor. I was the lone squatter. I decided the letter was more likely random than not and that the distributor had simply lucked out in choosing me as recipient. I made some copies of the letter to distribute later and pissed the rest of the day away.

That night I went to three different parties. The first was not a party but rather a show I took the subway to. A thin old man wearing all tan canvas work clothes with a pink and purple middle schooler's backpack got on the stop after me, then tried to get off as soon as the doors closed. I'm not sure if he mistook northbound for southbound or forgot about an errand he had meant to do or some such thing. He gestured for me to take off my earbuds and I eventually did. "PEPPERMINTS," he said. I grunted. Two made up dressed up women got on at the next stop and he asked them for peppermints too. The woman with the sequin fronted top reached into her purse and pulled out two mint chocolates and unwrapped the first. He grabbed it and popped it into his mouth, then swayed waiting for her to unwrap the second, and swallowed it almost whole as well. She rummaged back in her purse and came out with perfume, between his garbled murmurs to her and her laughing eyes and nods back. She sprayed him quick -- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 -- sprit sprit sprit expertly hitting for full coverage and then he asked for one more. Loped away and came back asking for still another spray but she knew better than to suffocate the man so she pulled out a

tube of lotion instead, curtly asked him for the back of his wrist, squirted out some. “Thank you, ma’m,” he said. The two women got off at City Hall in a good mood and the man got off at City Hall with levity in his step and I got off at Spring Garden.

The show was attended by a really young crowd but they had so much energy and were actually there to listen to the music and not just as an excuse to get fucked up that it was really fun to be a part of their surging back and across the barrier of the stage and ping-ponging around the pit. The lead singer was hot. I fantasized about him as he wrapped the mic cord around his hands and neck.

The next party was also a show that the door person waved me into because I thought it was a party until 4am but it ended at 12 and 12 was in a half hour. I knew most people there including the performer Y who played music while B the poet read poetry. Poetry is a hard one for me especially when its about supposedly broke college graduates gentrifying West Philadelphia, but it became hypnotic by the end. It was about the trolleys, the 34, which happened to have an operator who’s a poet himself, even though B wasn’t talking about that part. The poet on the 34 makes up rhymes about each stop and what’s going on there over a mumbled, incomprehensible mic which announces its turning on with a searingly loud, high-pitched ding untraceable to any other public transport vehicle in the SEPTA system. A ding implanted and implemented by this driver alone, who found a way to hack into the sound system not just with his voice. The passengers sit upright and acknowledge nothing and the trolley is quieter than most and it is unclear whether they are prisoners to his mutterings, grumbled like masturbatory drunken jokes hummed into a microphone at the eleventh hour or karaoke night, or attentive members of his Suessian cult. I think he is the better poet.

After that I didn’t know whether to go to the bar or the party. I went to the party which was unexpectedly in the same building I got driven to blindfolded on a motorcycle once by a man named S, and even more unexpectedly on the same floor and in the same unit of the steamy hot muscled art handler SH who was cheating on his clouty DJ girlfriend with me. The man at the door tried to charge me but I saw ST who was running the thing and she got me in. There were no drugs but there was a purse some woman left in the bathroom with $65 and a pack of Marlboro cigarettes in it. I took the $65 and 3 of the cigarettes, because I would have felt bad if I took them all. I left a copy of the ABBA letter in the purse.

There was an after party but when I went through the door no one was there. So I spent the night talking about Carl Jung and the state of things with a lover named K who I ran into halfway through the night. When I woke up it was to tea and coffee and breakfast and I fantasized about going on road trips with them with their playlists of second-wave Memphis trap pumping us down the road. They were moving to Maine in a week. We had two bittersweet final hand rolled cigarettes and they drove me home blasting hip-hop loud like it should be and pulling over to point out gorgeous decaying buildings they had never seen before.

Lovely, romantic, except that my bladder was exploding. I realized that I had needed to piss before I left their apartment. This was a horrible mistake. “Fuck,” I said. “I need to piss so bad.” This can be an on/off switch with me that I’m unable to control sometimes, because I was having too much cutty sex that was giving me too many UTIs. Urine started to leak. I was wearing black, brand new jeans. Good, liquid wouldn’t be noticeable on them. I tried to talk about anything other than how desperate I was to pee for the 1, 2, 3...4? Really, 4 blocks? Left of the drive. I prayed I could hold it together for the 15 more seconds I had to wait, bolted out of the car, and sprinted down the street after a botched goodbye-forever kiss.

Piss started spouting. I thought my pants could hold it all but I saw a stream spread from my leg to the front step. I fumbled with the door and then crouched down on the steps in exhilarating defeat. Succumbed. Let it flow free. Across the street was a compact car with the engine running and tinted windows. A man was watching me, no doubt. Maybe the same one who left the letter. No way to play off pissing yourself and sitting in your piss puddle and trying to recuperate while the steam rises around you. Fuck. My roommates were both home and downstairs, no doubt. Professional types. Cleaned every pan in the house with a different type of sponge. My pants were black. I could make it past them to the shower easy. I patted my pockets for my keys. Not in jacket. Not in front right pants pocket or front left. Fuck. Not in back pockets. Fuck. I checked again, again, again. Were they with K? How? Phone dead. I just have to knock on the door. I did not have a ton of keys anyways and had replacements to all of them scattered between a few people in the city. This was not my biggest problem compared to the puddled concrete beneath me. I sighed and reached up, ready to be discovered. My keys were stuck in the lock.

After I showered and threw a load in the laundry and dressed in dry clothes, I went outside again to run a few errands. The weekend was winding down. I checked the mailbox. There was an envelope with a letter inside and a blue pill. The letter read the following:

"BCCB

This is to tell you to please not disperse information that you don't know about.

Your mind is in the very beginning of understanding our alphabet and the best ways to purge itself from the old letters it knew before.

The hair that grows out of your skull is evidence of the track you are on now. Every hair is a sliver of your body saved.

The public does not like a copy of a copy.

What I need you to do is take this pill with a cup of water but not with the meat or blood of an animal or vegetable. You should be better now."

I took the pill and found myself very much under a stronger effect than the one at the rave two days ago. I was sitting criss-cross with my head bowed rocking backwards and forwards in the kitchen of the house next door when I came to. I must have crawled in through the window. I checked my phone and saw my boss had called me four times but when I called him back he said he figured it out. I decided I would walk down the street to buy a lightbulb at the 7-11 like I had originally intended to do hours earlier since the one in my ceiling burned out weeks ago and I hadn't replaced it yet. I looked at my watch and saw that it was 6 PM and that I still had time to get a good night's sleep for the work week tomorrow. I had 6 pillows on my bed which a stranger on the internet had given me for free that I had washed and cleaned in the load of laundry before the piss pants. I hadn't gotten to sleep on them yet because I hadn't slept in my own bed for a few days. I was excited to try them out. I texted my acid dealer for the first time in a year and told him I would be needing his services again soon. I fell asleep.

That was the start of things. The next weekend was full of cocaine spilling out the cracked mortar laced brick walls, dripping from pipes in ceiling, attics left open, apartment keyholes left unlocked. I got migraines, all week prior, and fed myself Excedrin to make them go away and then I got more. I went to art openings and I listened to people talk about art.

On my way to one of these, two white women got on the subway with me at the Snyder station. They were large and aged poorly, 40s indistinguishable from 30s, and looked like they were on their way either to an anime convention, an ageplay kink conference, or some combination therein. Plastered foundation with no primer underneath or contouring on top, hair pulled tight and dyed down to the roots, vests with T-shirts underneath a size too small for them, pins stabbed up the front announcing every sort of precursory shallow political opinion either of them had never thought beyond, backpacks on, and fishnets under shorts. One of them has a clip in her hair with cherries and enamel on it that looks like it came from her grandparents house. On the train they adore the stares they attract and make themselves still more conspicuous with every possible piece of body language. Their voices are loud enough to overhear easily without actually talking to anyone except each other, and they are giggling with delight over the attention they are getting. One of them has a water bottle with a brown iced-tea looking drink inside clipped to her backpack. A man her age gets on the train and asks what it is. She says "water," and seems proud of the witticism of her answer. The man is amused too. Soon everyone is involved in her boast. I hear the word "water" over and over, at least ten times, and see people laughing. I get off at Race/Vine, disturbed. Now to look at art, mostly sober.

The art is not notable in any way shape or form but not particularly horrid either. I buy a beer for $2 and am thanked for supporting the arts. I successfully quell my urge to murder the 5 college students dropped at the door of the gallery who spin through the rooms like a cyclone and believe their loud sarcasm is advanced art criticism that resonates with the rest of us similarly bored and aloof gallery goers. I love the room on the third floor about black time. The aura hangs like a chandelier. I felt the weight of so many souls and cultures as restless buried ghosts, their cemetery in every pocket watch, grandfather clock, appointment card.

It is 9:30PM and I leave to go to the next art show which is just a party for everyone to meet up at and find better parties to go to. I immediately clog the toilet

when I get there and tell this to the mom who is screaming outside the bathroom that her children need to GO. She is successfully taken aback by my forwardness. I drink three more beers that are this time free and begin to feel the effects of alcohol on an empty stomach. Making conversation with these fucks is grueling. I manage. I bum three cigarettes, miss the bus, and realize it is now pouring rain. There are so many insanely wasted white girls.

At midnight I get a ride to The Dolphin from my boss R, who is at the show, and he uses his plus one to get us in for free. The music is house or trance or some shit and the club is dark as hell, with LED panels on facing sides of the dance floor providing the main illumination. It is so straight. The women wear dresses and skirts and clothing that was revealing and the men wear plain shirts or button ups. This is bizarre; I pass as a man without a thought. It is so fun to dance; I am left entirely alone. R buys me a beer and I buy myself a second. The word COCAINE is spoken and the entire group I came with from the show immediately starts sniffling around the single bag of it. It disappears in moments. At 2:00AM they kick us all out and I hang outside talking to Party Steve under an umbrella. He tries to get me a cigarette but everyone is so used to ignoring him that he can't. I bum one instead. The other Steve (SR) comes barging out the door and tells me to get in the car. I ask where we're going and he says someplace weird. He's just following R. The driver does a bump of a newly materialized bag of coke and we're off.

Turns out it's just Rite Aid we're going to, which is a spot in an old warehouse that's now a ton of studio spaces. Rite Aid used to be Lacquer and it used to be tiny noise shows for $5. Now the cover is $20 and there's a fake bouncer outside and they give you wristbands and have a coat rack, but its still in a warehouse with no heat. I'm not crazy about it, was trying to jet, when someone paid me in. Not sure who. Dance for a while. Queerer crowd. The first bump of coke I get is from R. SR and I coke babble about age differences and unbalanced power dynamics. I went back in and danced a little better.

SR and ST and R and everyone else we came with left around 4AM and I went out to bum a cigarette from a man named J who turned out to also have the most generous 20 of coke I've seen in my life to sell me. He told me he was gay and I told him I was gay and he said I was cute. He said he likes fucking on coke and I said so do I. We went inside and made out on the couch and bought each other beers to pass back and forth and he got us free molly from a friend and we danced some more and made out some more. He got us a car to my place at 7AM. He told me he was 39 and I told him my age. I opened the door to my room and there was a huge gaping gnawing tormented exorcism of a charcoal drawing covering the entirety of one of my walls I had never seen before. I stood stock still for a minute and then went inside with the same sort of sliding footstep I would take if I was on acid, because I instantly felt like I was on acid. "Did you do that?" J said about the drawing. I said no. He said it was gorgeous and I said yeah. I sort of kept staring at it and then, still unblinking and eyes wide, swept my eyes across the rest of the room. Landed on J in bed. Bulge in pants. I looked back at the drawing again and then back at J. Fell on him.

He told me exactly how to suck his cock and lick his balls how he liked it and called me a slutty boy over and over between the bumps of coke he fed us. It got me so hard. He fucked me for a minute but he mostly wanted me to fuck him missionary so he could look at me. His asshole was perfect. He came on my face and told me I passed the top test. He left and it was 9AM and O was coming over in an hour to get drunk in the morning with me and watch movies.

I staggered downstairs, made coffee, drank the whole pot, came back upstairs, stared at the drawing again, which I had been blocking from my mind while J was there, and passed out for five minutes until I heard my phone buzz and O outside. When I opened my eyes again the drawing was bigger, I swear to god. Charcoal had crept over the joints in the drywall onto the surrounding walls, but only a smidge. I simply didn't know what to do but stare at it as I left the room to let O in. When she came up and saw it she started jabbering about how much she loved it and when I butted in to say I had nothing to do with it, she just laughed. I couldn't convince her I wasn't joking about it. I drank more coffee and stayed drunk. When she left I went to the noise show at the same warehouse building we had been to the night before. It was 4 hours long and god awfully horrible except for my two friends RO and RI who played. BP was there and I indulged in thinking about my perpetual crush on him without actually talking to him.

Afterwards JI and C and P and QC and A and T and KI and JH and a few others and I were all hanging around outside drinking beers and deciding what to do with the rest of the night. I was telling JI about J because JI is a huge homo and he was shrieking in delight when two men walked down the street, looked at us, kept

walking, and then came back. “That looks like the guy I was telling you about,” I said to JI out the corner of his mouth. They came up and it was them. J was still flirty with me and I was with him too. They said they were going to Pleasuredome and wouldn’t we join? But we declined and instead all piled in two cars sitting on each others laps and spilling out the windows like a punk circus car. When we got to A and QCs house the dog tried to snap at me but I had mostly befriended it by the end of the night. I talked to JI and C a little more and had a few more beers and headed home at 5AM. I had all but forgotten about the wall situation, remembered it, and elected to pass out without turning the lightson. When I woke up I decided to really inspect what the fuck was going on with it.

It didn’tseem to have crept any further onto the other walls and I wondered if maybe my coked out brain had just hallucinated the expansion. Still, how the fuck was it here in the first place? I immediately assumed, of course, that whoever was leaving me letters had crawled from the apartment next door into my room and was responsible. The drawing style seemed a visual version of their writing style. And, indeed, when I got inches from the wall, I realized much of the drawing was actually composed from words, written over hundreds of times and smudged blacked whited blacked out again. Illegible. I had no idea how whoever drew it drew so fast. I had no idea what it was to summon, or what I was supposed to do about it besides keep staring. There was all day long to do that.

I don’t remember much of the week. It went by in a fever blur.

I left my room fewer times than I ever had. I was obsessed with a kind of monomaniacal drive to finish editing the video I was working on, get to another party with gay men, and do more cocaine. The only breaks I took from working on the video were to jerk off. O and H wouldn’t leave me alone, and I immediately started to hate them. I found time to get tested for HIV and buy a new shirt for the party.
I went to the theater and watched a new movie about a nightmare horror-death-fuck-kill-rape spree acid trip caused by a woman from Berlin spiking sangria at an abandoned school that a troupe of dancers were practicing at on Friday before I went to West Philadelphia for the party. I was the only one in the theater. They played me the movie anyway. It made me stupid horny. Half way through, one other person came through the doors. He sat in the same row as me, on the opposite side. Ten minutes after sitting down, when the German woman pisses on the floor and everyone in the film starts freaking out, he moved next to me and put my hand on his cock. It was big, sweaty, semi erect. I started massaging, and then eventually stroking. I sat on his lap. He teased me and teased me and finally came, without ever saying a word or doing more than lightly tracing the edges of my asshole with his finger, and then zipped up his fly and left with as little bravado as he had entered. I was edged beyond belief. I watched the rest of the film with a horny fury that I refused to relieve so early in the night.

I saw a cowboy on the train. He had a beautiful brand New but broken in outfit on. Blue jeans, stiff, tan leather jacket, taut, tan hat, brim the perfect width, pointed, dark, shiny boots that brought out his mahogany skin perfectly. He was old and wore his wrinkles as well as his clothes. He took a trinket out of a bag he was holding and inspected in. A bejeweled, cheap, ugly, rhinestone flower, maybe a present for a child. He turned it over and over in his hand, apparently pleased. He got off the train before me.

I went to the techno party.

It was overpriced again, even if the DJs were from Berlin. The circuit had blown when I got there, so there was no sound or lights and not many people, just German tuttering coming from all sides. I wholeheartedly hoped my drink would be spiked with LSD. I was in the perfect mood to murder someone, or at least watch someone get murdered. I didn’t talk to anyone the whole night, except to ask for and receive cigarettes. Leftover coke doesn’t work, especially when there’s no one around to do it with. I left at 5am after a few hits of poppers and four beers that did nothing to me. Who the fuck likes poppers outside of sex, anyway?

Saturday I woke up at 9 and worked on the video all day long until I had to leave for the party that night that my friend AN was throwing. I got to the same building I had been at 14 hours ago at 7pm and set up my projector and laptop and VJed for 8 hours until it was 3, or 2, or something. A 19 year old named D wouldn’t stop coming over and flirting with me and trying to bum a kiss. I danced behind my computer. O came and was clingy. I stopped dancing behind my computer. I got home at 5am again totally sober and in a foul mood after helping AN clean up the entire rest of the party so I could get a ride and not a trolley home. I worked on the video until 10 am when it was finally done. I took a nap while it exported.

My birthday came and went at the sleaziest gay bar in the city. I got into a fight with H until SH made him leave. I sobbed in O's arms.

On Friday I went to the noise show at the art gallery and accidentally got far too drunk far too quickly. Everyone was leaving from the show to go to the rave, so I piled in a car with C and P and DA and KI and JI and survived another horribly drunk heavy metal-blasted screeching swerve from one side of the city to the other. As soon as we walked through the doors to the rave A man with red curly hair bubbled around his face gave me a container of bath salts which I hurriedly ate. They worked. Tweaking the fuck out and drunk enough to not remember much of what happened, leaving the rave after what seemed like not nearly enough time to justify having gone in the first place, and careening back across the city to SN's birthday party on the roof of a tall rowhouse in North Philadelphia. Somehow I got home and woke up the next day completely naked on the toilet with a half eaten fish next to me. My entire body felt like it was made of alcohol. I put on a pair of sunglasses and then clothes, puked the fish and every other remnant of food out of my body, and somehow left the house without falling over or passing out.

The 7/11 with Gatorade was two entire horribly long and bright blocks away. I didn't know if I would make it. I turned the corner and saw smoke. Two cars with mild dents and scratches were driving away. Walked closer. Saw fire and a car smashed into another parked car. The engine was in flames and people were shouting and circled around the driver's door. I saw BO, the block's local and ever-present stoop sitting and hollering drunk, watching, and asked him what was going on. He yelled back at me that the guy rammed his car into the parked car and revved the gas until the engine blew up and was now inside the driver's seat refusing to leave while the flames burned him alive. I said Holy Shit.

Two fire trucks and two ambulances and four police cars screamed up in a minute or two and started blasting the fire out. It took ten minutes before the flames were gone and longer for the smoke to stop. Two firefighters walked over to the hit car and smashed three windows open and started searching it. I kept asking BO where the driver was and eventually walked over. No one was in either car. He must have bolted when the police arrived. But why did the firefighters smash open the other car? I could figure out no logical reason for it and decided the accident was no accident at all and some insanely specific crazy suicide crime targeting that specific parked car. I wondered if the driver was the same man who had left me the letters. After about five Gatorades and ten gallons of water, I left for the noise fest and was suddenly back at Rabbit after a long bus ride with three old women just off work doting over one young black women's small child and sneaking her dinosaur stickers from a huge pad pulled out of a shopping bag.

I stuck a pill with "E" on it into the drug baggie in the bathroom figuring I would return the favor done to me long ago. I puked in the same bathroom later that night, after going to the Chinese food store and finding out they sold no food there, and then going to the Mexican store and buying a tiny bag of plantain chips, my one food item of the day. I puked and was genuinely sick and not bulimic, and not able to get drunk or high or go to the rave after the noise show because of it.

I break up with H and then I break up with O. I start seeing spiders covering my ceiling. My room smells of puke, constantly, even when I'm not puking. I don't feel like walking downstairs to get new tin cups full of water, because I have to pass my roommates. Someone or something fills the cup of water by my bed for me. I start emptying my trash can onto the roof outside my room. All the liquid inside from the trash dried into these crusted swirls of different days meals and art projects and whatever other sewage I brought into and then out of my life. It looks like a palette. I go back to working on the video, even though it's done. A frame by frame obsession. K sends me links to amazing music and I let it play and then autopilot spiral into other music. The light is always on when I fall asleep, and each time I wake up, there is a new additional lamp burning on in my room and eventually, new cube taps and power strips to match.

I see him, too, finally. Apparition like. Crouching, hand crossed over knees in a squat. Backlight and twilit at the same time and a shady, dusty gray. His hair looks exactly like the charcoal explosion on the wall. Hazy, hazy, as I drift back to sleep…. Blink my eyes open again and he's brushing something off my forehead. I jerk up and he slides away, smoothly, like he's on ice. Back to the crouch, hand stroking his chin contemplatively this time. Obscured, obscured, and I can't quite tell how, except for maybe all the goddamn lamps, half of which have no lampshades. There's so many accusations, threats, angers I could shout at him, or plain and simple questions, but

as freaked out as my heart is racing, I don't want to scare him off, or end his bizarre presence in my life by declaring myself aligned with the sane, boring indignation that would be the most expected reaction to his trespasses. I don't want to use easy lingo, socially acceptable words of whatever muted emotion I should feel and present, to appear equipped for him. I already do that during every conversation I have at every party I go to. I am better than that. I am more interesting. I have nothing to say to this man. I simply want him to keep showing up.

After I see him that once I don't again. The week passes. Springtime weather.

Every morning, it is a beautiful day to black out the window and not leave the house.

A mouse crawls into the extra vomit left in my trash can, but the cat kills it.

My childhood friend AS calls me, excited, asking if he can bus to Philadelphia and hang out for the night. I ask if he wants to go to the goth night. He's tentative. I tell her I have to go, for work, and I realize, hours after putting the phone down, that I'm choosing to party instead of care about my relationships with my friends. And then I finish my peach-mango-seltzer-vodka that tastes like hand sanitizer with an aftertaste of dog shit and I go to the club.

I forget my leftover coke. Z somehow gives me a hit of poppers through his vape, which is a genius exception to my no-poppers-outside-of-sex rule. I stay until 2:00AM because I assume there will be an after party at the office, but R makes no moves to do so and it's raining, so everyone just goes home. I hook up with the 31 year old SE who I've wanted to fuck for a year and saw at the club. His dick is small and he wants me to ride him which I never do, but he tells me how he wants it and it feels good enough to not feel like I'm just letting sex happen. Sleeping almost naked with him feels good. He's smiley.

The hangover the next day is done by noon or one or two and I am ready to get drunk again by three. I go to the overpriced after hours party at a secret location in West Philadelphia which is just the same building I've been to at least twenty times now for other secret parties and drink all the vodka I brought too fast. I dance lots, at the front. It is good music to dance to. Someone gives me a free adderall and someone else gives me a free hit of molly and I do my leftover coke. Leftover coke works when you are drunk enough and the music is loud enough.

The line for the portajohns is enormous outside so I piss around the corner. I keep telling people to do the same and they look at me like I'm a mutant.
I smoke the other half of the pack of cigs I bought yesterday. At 5:00AM I am outside smoking and someone comes up asking if I know the number for a cab. I tell him and he calls it and asks me for the address of the place. He's going to Chestnut Hill, which is an $80 taxi or something. He asks if there is a spot around to buy cigs and I say I think so but I've never been and he says he'll buy me a pack if I walk with him so I walk the one block over and he buys two packs of cigarettes and an iced tea and a Coke. The cab doesn't come. I tell him he can come home with me if he's strapped for a place to stay. He asks the trolley driver if he has change for a twenty and I tell him to just get on the fucking car.

We fuck four times. His cock is huge and he's really good at using it for some reason. His name was CH. He will not leave. He buys $70 of delivery food, eats a few bites of it, and refuses to take the rest because it would be too inconvenient. I try to get him to leave for hours and he ends up going at 4 after I push him out the goddamn door. He calls a taxi home.

Across the street there is an ancient sunglasses-wearing woman in her white, lottery ticket covered car smoking a cigarette with the window down and the radio blasting "Dancing Queen." I love it. I take a walk around the block and hear music blasting from another car. Walk closer, investigating. It's another white car, window closed and tinted, but cracked enough to let out a thin trail of cigarette smoke.
The song is "Dancing Queen." What? I let my walk take me further, meandering down alleys, and running into xeroxes of the same car, the same smoke, the same sunglasses or tinted window, the same song. Even though I'm walking long enough for that song to be over and done with six or seven times in a row on any radio station. Where is BO on the street corner to explain this to me?

This, more than the note, the apartment, the drugs in bags, the drawing, the lamps, the figure, makes no fucking sense. This is me losing my grip on reality, or some strange stunt pulled to freak me the fuck out. And it finally does. I run home. I deadbolt the door, throw nine of the lamps out onto my deck, and lock my window. I duct tape a note to it, facing out: "EXPLAIN DANCING QUEEN." I smear the whole charcoal drawing out, my nothing but my hands and arms and body, and stand back,

breathing heavily, looking at the huge gray smudge with some words and details poking out here and there. I look down at my hands, ashen. I shower for a long time. I sit in my bed and just think for a while. I swear I am over parties. I swear it, I swear it. Even though there's two techno ragers that night that I still feel a prickle of lust to go to. I'm over it. Enough. I feel so blown out by it all, and disgusted at the wealthy people who go to these things. But I have to work the party next week. A strange function at a spa that sounds like an orgy but is probably just a coke fueled nightmare. And I have to buy slippers for it and make a robe. And I feel more safe when I'm out of my house. The only time this cult of bizarre stagings happen to me is when I'm home. The hangovers seem like the fuel.

I end up going out most nights that week in a blur of drunken karaoke and MFO rides back from North Philadelphia bars. Crack heads stare at me with sticky lips opening and closing like fish through the glass barrier between the back of the bus and the back exit. A skinny ankled big bicepped man on PCP screams about god and challenges everyone at the MFL station to fight him before jumping onto the train tracks. Another man named SU follows me home from the MFL with promises of cocaine that never materialized and fucks me while I'm asleep. There's some show, which drones loud and mushed into every other sound I've heard at every other show recently. It plays in my head after I leave. I find out that BO has died. I end up sucked into the houses of strange sober OCD freaks who talk their loneliness at me in quick squirts and sprays of conversation, storytelling, showing off. I go wherever my boredom, curiousity, and apathy to resist someone else's stronger willed suggestion lands me. A strange old warehouse that used to produce windows and now is filled with studios built from every glass paned model left behind. An unlocked stairwell that leads five flights of empty takeout food, abandoned clothing articles, piss, shit, remnants, up to the top of a parking garage in Center City. The old Spring Garden station turned graffiti lodestone on top of the out of order viaduct train tracks that run just past Chinatown. Climb a thin plank of wood to get to its roof and peer in from another angle. Climb fences. Climb down. Spend money. Stay drunk and on the move move move. Smoke crack and get my hands zip tied behind me and waxed burned on my chest and beat with the metal buckle of a belt while I eat out pussy in big bites and suck on cock till I choke and vomit up blood. Anything to stay out of my house.

At work I look up apartment openings and apply feverishly to all of them. I need to get out of here.

Soon enough it is Saturday night and time for the spa party. I haven't slept because I was out all night drinking. I shovel my remaining adderall into my mouth and down more coffee. My vision gets dizzy in waves as I pull our gear from one side of the building to the other, then to a third side with my boss tells me we're loading somewhere different. We have a ridiculous amount of stuff for this gig. An hour long drive. Tension. We get there. We get set up. We're efficient and fast at this point. The air is hot and humid and R leaves and comes back in his bathing suit and robe. The partygoers start to arrive in their bathing suits and robes. I've opted for wearing my clothes and not participating in the spa part of things.

I'm perched by our VJ booth like a hawk or a god, overseeing, overlooking, sneeringly. R comes and visits every so often. He slides the largest bag of cocaine I've ever seen under the mixer and tells me I can have as much as I want. I start downing beers and doing bumps and thinking depraved thoughts with increasingly tweaked out gestures.

Everyone is just chill. There's no fucked up sex or excessive drugs. I'm beyond bummed, not that I even necessarily wanted to participate. I'm furious at these hazed out lightly tripping steamed saunaed fuckers for all sitting around and playing calm ambient beats and swimming in the pool and generally not destroying the spa. Higher and higher. Sped up up up. D comes upstairs and asks me how its going. So does S and T. Which S and T? I've lost track of who the fuck is who, there's the same faces at all these dumb expensive events. They all deserve to WAKE UP. I'm in that extremely dangerous zone of being incredibly wound up and faint with fatigue simultaneously. And thinking intrusive thoughts and letting the cruel laughing voice behind them be my own. The crouching greyed out shadow with a million lamps scorching his image into an otherworldly blaze. Splashes in the pool. The DJ station looping softly and serenely over and over. I put them together in my mind. I walk down the stairs. Fast. No time to think. No time to think. Push the speaker stack into the water. Everyone is screaming. Electrocution. A trap. A big, watery, pit waiting to be lit up. They fry, the people in the pool, or at least the flailing limbs I see before the power surges and goes out make me think so. I run for the doors, horrified, numb. Slam into them past the front desk. Did anyone even see me do it? Did I even do it?

There's a white car out front, cigarette smoke seeping from it. No time to fuck around with this monster woman this time. I rip open the drivers side door and pull her out. Shove her down. What the fuck is she, anyway? Some weird lizardy alien in a human suit sent to spy on me? She doesn't react, her face doesn't crack. Whatever she is, I'm not sticking around to find out. I jump in the car and take off. Out of here. Onto the highway, the nearest one, as fast as possible. Take me far away. Don't get pulled over. Keep it together long enough to pass toll booths and speed traps without suspicion. Drive until dawn, and then past dawn. Drive as far as R's bag of cocaine will take me. Drive away from every other copycat narc white car littered with candy boxes and old person foundation-perfumepisssmell and blown out speakers. I am going north. To K. No, not to K, there's no reason to drag them into this mess. North west. Michigan. Dakota. Montana. Yes, Montana, that's it. And then ditch the car and work on a farm somewhere. Never to hear the sound of a party rolling up on me ever again, or get drunk and dance around so many other people, or do such a wide and stupid variety of uppers. Maybe I will just take the acid I've wanted to take on top of some mountain until I waste away into the wind and the wheat and the stones. To be only around people who have only been around each other their whole lives. No shadowy figure writing notes in towns like these to seek me out as their prey. No apartments next door. No pieces of art with drug baggies sticking out of them. My insanity was environmental. Location specific. As long as I can remove myself from it.

When I get to Montana it has been four days and it is night time. I remember reading about Ken Kesey's staged suicide and decide to try it for myself. At the top of a cliff overlooking a beautiful lake below, I push the white car off the road and over the edge. It sinks. I start walking down the road. I wonder when I will get to town.

